

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Master Photo Caption List

Potowmack Company: Great Falls Canal & Locks
West Bank of the Potomac River,
12 miles upriver from Washington, DC
Great Falls
Fairfax County
Virginia

HAER No. VA-13, 13A, 13B, 13C

Great Falls Canal: Locks 3, 4 & 5 HAER VA, 30-GREFA, 1C-

VA-13C-1 Remnants of the last lock on the George Washington "Potowmack" Canal, just before the barge entered the Potomac River. The latter can be seen through the foliage of the tree which has grown up in the old canal bed.

On the left hand side of the photograph, not shown here in its entirety, are the old iron studdings which held the gates, to permit the barges to pass easily into the river. On the right hand side of the photograph is shown the crumbling remains of the lock with their recessed oval space clearly shown, into which the lock gate retrieved when the barge was lowered to the next level. The depth from the spot where the individual is shown pointing to the top of the lock, is about 24 or 25 ft., and the canal has been filled up with broken stones and silt to a considerable depth. The marks are clearly present where drills were hand-driven into the rock and either split by gunpowder or expansion of iron rods driven by sledge hammers. It is rather

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- CONT'D: difficult to get down into this canal bottom at the present time, due to the density of growth and the depth of the canal from the terrain above. Mr. Horyczak, photographer, 1943.
- VA-13C-2 Looking SE through the cut where Locks 3, 4 and 5 were located. Jack Boucher, photographer, 1971.
- VA-13C-3 View of the mouth of George Washington's "Potowmack" Canal at the Great Falls of the Potomac River. The view is taken from a rock in the Potomac River looking up into the Canal. Trees and dense growth now fill the old aperture which once permitted barges to come down the Ohio Valley onto the broad expanse of the Potomac River. This view, taken September 1, 1943, evidences the very low water then existing on the Potomac River, as is clearly shown by the water marks on the rocks on the left hand side of the photograph. That portion where the individual is standing, up to the height of his hat, is normally underwater. Deep in the sand at this spot was found a part of one of the old hand-brought lock hinges which formerly swung the first lock gates about 100 ft. inland from where this photograph was taken. Where the individual is pointing and elsewhere, are found the remnants of old iron wedges, which had been driven into the walls to cleave the rock or to form an aperture in which gunpowder could be exploded to clear away the opening. The rock in the immediate foreground of the right hand corner of the photograph shows two pieces of iron bars driven into its face, where it was formerly placed as part of the side wall of the canal. The torrential floods have washed it away into its present location. A critical survey of the rocks and apertures betray, at this low water period, the havoc that has been wrought by flash floods on the Potomac River at various times. Mr. Horyczak, photographer, 1943.
- VA-13C-4 View looking from the north of George Washington's "Potowmack" Canal at Great Falls on the Potomac River, taken September 1, 1943. The low water of the Potomac is definitely shown by the markings on the bank of the river, immediately across stream from where photograph was taken. The usual water mark existing under normal conditions, is shown on the rock in the immediate foreground at a point about even with the spectator's pipe. The spectator is pointing to the evidences of old drillings made in this hard rock by General Washington and his courageous crew, who either blasted or cleaved this opening in the solid wall of rock, to permit boats to pass around the Great Falls and thence into the Potomac River.

In the foreground, a slab of stone is shown, containing a broken bit of the old iron drills which were used to force this opening into nature's walls.

The heavy rock shown on the floor of the canal, leading out into the river, is the result of floods which have carried the rock from its location immediately to the left of the picture into the present location.